

FACTS ABOUT PROBLEM GAMBLING

Problem Gambling Helpline: 1-800-547-6133

How many people gamble?

According to the 2003 Washington State Needs Assessment Household Survey, 54% of adults gambled during the previous year. Most of those adults were able to gamble responsibly, which means they could:

- Set loss limits ahead of time
- Stick to the loss limits they set
- Set a limit on the amount of time they spent gambling
- Take frequent breaks
- Balance gambling with other activities
- Only gamble with money set aside for entertainment
- Do not borrow in order to gamble
- Do not gamble when they are stressed, depressed, or troubled

How many are problem gamblers?

In 2004, approximately 7.2% of Washington gamblers, or approximately 98,700 people, reported having one or more symptoms of problem gambling.

Is there help for a gambler whose gambling is out of control?

Yes, there is help for both the gambler and family members who are affected by problem gambling. To find out about help in your community, call toll-free

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People are on hand to listen and help you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What happens when I call the number?

Someone will listen to you, ask some questions, and give you information. Everything you say will be kept confidential. The person will give you the Gambler's Anonymous or Gam-Anon meetings near you, send you some literature about problem gambling, and give you phone numbers for counselors near you. It will be up to you to call the counselor for an appointment.

What if I don't speak English very well?

The person who answers the phone may ask you to stay on the telephone while he or she calls an interpreter service to assist in the call. When you go to treatment, if an interpreter is needed, that can be arranged.

Who pays for problem gambling treatment?

During the 2005 legislative session, a bill was passed that set aside money to publicly fund a program to prevent and treat problem gambling. The legislation says that a person qualifies for treatment if they desire help and are unable to pay for treatment.

How long does treatment last?

Treatment can last different lengths of time. You and the problem gambling counselor will agree on a treatment plan. The counselor may recommend that you participate in a group for problem gamblers or family members. The counselor may suggest that you and your spouse have some or all of the treatment sessions together. There are only a certain number of sessions available to you free of charge, so you will want to make the most of your treatment. Family members can also participate in treatment.

Can a family member get treatment even if the gambler is not in treatment?

Yes, there are a limited number of sessions for family members.

Can I make my spouse come to treatment?

Unfortunately, there is no way to make someone come to treatment. Treatment focuses on the person who comes to treatment. For a spouse, that might mean gaining skills for emotional, financial, and physical protection. It might mean dealing with depression or anxiety that often results from gambling being out of control in the family.

Can a teen get treatment for problem gambling?

Yes, a teen can get treatment. However, there are not as many counselors experienced in treating teen gamblers, so it may mean traveling farther to get counseling.

What is DASA doing to have treatment more accessible?

The DSHS Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA) is working with the Washington State Council on Problem Gambling to provide training to Chemical Dependency and Mental Health Counselors, so that they are trained to counsel problem gamblers and their family members. As counselors have basic and advanced training, and have clinical oversight while treating problem gamblers, they will become certified, as a way for clients to know that the counselor has had appropriate training and practice as a problem gambling counselor.

How do I know if treatment is going to help me?

There are several factors that influence whether or not treatment is going to work for you. The most important one is how badly you want to get better. Getting better is difficult work. Your attitude is a large part of whether or not you succeed.

People define success differently. Some people say that abstinence is the only success. Others say that if the problems they were having because of gambling are reduced, then that is a success. Think about what success means to you. What are your expectations of treatment?

Where can I get more information on problem gambling?

- Washington State Council on Problem Gambling: www.wscpg.org
- DSHS Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse: www1.dshs.wa.gov
- National Council on Problem Gambling: www.ncpgambling.org or 1-800-522-4700 (national helpline) or (202) 547-9204 (administrative offices).